

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BRIDGE 01982 01 OF 04 211719Z
ACTION ARA-14

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FRB-03 INR-10 NSAE-00 ICA-11 TRSE-00 XMB-02
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AMCONSUL MARTINIQUE POUCH

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 4 BRIDGETOWN 1982

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ECON, DO

SUBJ: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT--ISLAND SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS
-- DOMINICA

1. SUMMARY: THERE FOLLOWS THE FIRST IN A PROPOSED SERIES OF SHORT CABLES OUTLINING THE PRINCIPAL PROBLEMS OF THE VARIOUS ISLANDS OF THE EASTERN CARIBBEAN WITHIN OUR AREA OF JURISDICTION. ALSO TRANSMITTED ARE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AMELIORATING SOME OF THESE PROBLEMS. WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE A REGIONAL SECTORAL APPROACH TO THE PROBLEMS OF THE AREA IS THE PREFERRED ONE BUT THERE ARE SOME ASPECTS OF DEVELOPMENTAL STRATEGY WITH ISLAND SPECIFIC APPLICATION. THIS FIRST CABLE DIRECTS THE DEPARTMENT'S ATTENTION TO THE WILD AND BEAUTIFUL ISLAND OF DOMINICA WHICH MAY WELL PRESENT THE MORE INTRACTABLE PROBLEMS OF ANY OF THE ISLAND STATES IN OUR AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY. END SUMMARY.

2. IT IS PROBABLE THAT DOMINICA WILL ATTAIN INDEPENDENCE IN
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PAGE 02 BRIDGE 01982 01 OF 04 211719Z

THE FALL OF THIS YEAR. IN AND OF ITSELF DOMINICA IS OF SCANT SIGNIFICANCE TO U.S. INTERESTS. HOWEVER, WEAK POLITICAL AND SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS AND A DETERIORATING ECONOMY IN WHICH ABJECT POVERTY IS THE NORM, CREATE CONDITIONS WHICH AN ACTIVE MARXIST POLITICAL FACTION WITH CUBAN CONNECTIONS SEEKS TO EXPLOIT. THIS SITUATION CONCERNS DOMINICA'S NEIGHBORS. AMELIORATIVE ASSISTANCE, TO BE

MOST EFFECTIVE, IS BEST COORDINATED THROUGH MULTILATERAL ORGANIZATIONS AND IN CONSULTATION WITH THE BRITISH AND CANADIANS AND WITH THE FRENCH AUTHORITIES ON DOMINICA'S NEAREST NEIGHBORS, MARTINIQUE AND GUADELOUPE.

3. BACKGROUND

DOMINICA IS A MOUNTAINOUS, VERDANT, VOLCANIC ISLAND LOCATED MIDWAY IN THE LESSER ANTILLES. ITS NEAREST NORTHERN NEIGHBOR IS GUADELOUPE, ITS NEAREST SOUTHERN NEIGHBOR IS MARTINIQUE, BOTH OF WHICH ARE DEPARTMENTS OF FRANCE. ITS POPULATION IS ROUGHLY 80,000 AND HAS BEEN GROWING RECENTLY AT ABOUT 2 PERCENT / YEAR. PER CAPITA INCOME IS ABOUT US\$347.00. BY MOST INDICES, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS IN DOMINICA (AS IN MOST OF THE EASTERN CARIBBEAN ISLANDS) WORSENERED OVER THE LAST FIVE YEARS. 1) GDP IS MORE OR LESS STATIC; 2) PER CAPITA GDP IS DECLINING; 3) UNEMPLOYMENT IS MARKEDLY INCREASING; 4) TRADE DEFICITS ARE INCREASING; AND 5) GOVERNMENT REVENUES REMAIN STATIC OR ARE DECLINING AND PUBLIC BANKRUPTCY IS A CLEAR AND PRESENT DANGER. DESPITE THESE HANDICAPS THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT IS COMMITTED TO INDEPENDENCE FROM BRITAIN. DOMINICAN LEADERS EXPECT THEY CAN OBTAIN GREATER FOREIGN ASSISTANCE AS AN INDEPENDENT STATE.

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PAGE 03 BRIDGE 01982 01 OF 04 211719Z

4. THE ISLAND'S ECONOMY IS BASED ON AGRICULTURE. MOST RURAL FAMILIES HAVE SMALL PLOTS ON WHICH THEY GROW FOOD FOR HOME CONSUMPTION. MAJOR EXPORT CROPS ARE BANANAS, COCONUTS, AND CITRUS. TOURISM AND INDUSTRIAL ACTIVITY ARE QUITE LIMITED. GIVEN THE STATIST, AUTOCRATIC AND XENOPHOBIC ORIENTATION OF THE GOVERNMENT, THERE IS LITTLE INCENTIVE FOR PRIVATE INVESTMENT.

5. PRINCIPAL PROBLEMS

A. THERE IS WIDESPREAD DISTRUST OF THE GOVERNMENT AND GROWING SUSPICION OF HIGH-LEVEL CORRUPTION.

B. THE GOVERNING PHILOSOPHY INCLINES TOWARDS STATE INTERVENTION AND CREATES UNCERTAINTY IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR.

C. THE GOVERNMENT IS CHARACTERIZED BY INEFFICIENCY AND INCOMPETENCE. THERE IS VERY LITTLE CAPABILITY WITHIN THE CIVIL SERVICE TO IDENTIFY PROBLEMS AND TO IMPLEMENT PROGRAMS OR PROJECTS TO ADDRESS SAME.

D. UNEMPLOYMENT IS RELIABLY ESTIMATED AT 24 PERCENT AND UNDER-EMPLOYMENT AT 12. AMONG YOUTHS AGED 15-24 THE UNEMPLOYMENT RATE IS ABOUT 40. THE WORK FORCE IS EXPECTED TO DOUBLE WITHIN FIVE YEARS.

E. GOVERNMENT REVENUES ARE REMAINING STATIC IN THE FACE OF INCREASING DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES. AS UK FINANCIAL SUPPORT DECLINES, THE GOVERNMENT INCREASES ITS BORROWING. IT IS DIFFICULT TO SEE HOW LOANS WILL BE REPAID.

F. THE ECONOMY IS HEAVILY DEPENDENT ON EXTERNAL TRADE, AND THUS EXTREMELY VULNERABLE TO "IMPORTED" INFLATION.
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CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 BRIDGE 01982 01 OF 04 211719Z

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PAGE 01 BRIDGE 01982 02 OF 04 211720Z
ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 AID-05 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08
FRB-03 INR-10 NSAE-00 ICA-11 TRSE-00 XMB-02
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AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN
AMCONSUL MARTINIQUE POUCH

CONFIDENTIAL SECTION 2 OF 4 BRIDGETOWN 1982

G. "OVERHEAD" COSTS OF THE GOVERNMENT ARE EXCESSIVE I.E. AN ISLAND OF 80,000 PEOPLE HAS TO SUPPORT AN AIRPORT, A DEEP WATER HARBOR, A POSTAL SYSTEM, A TEACHER TRAINING COLLEGE, ETC.

H.THE "BRAIN-DRAIN" REDUCED BY ONE-HALF ALL THE COLLEGE-EDUCATED AND/OR TECHNICALLY-TRAINED PEOPLE. THOUGH EMIGRATION HAS BEEN SUBSTANTIALLY REDUCED, THE GREAT MAJORITY OF THOSE WHO NOW CANNOT EMIGRATE ARE THE UNEDUCATED AND UNSKILLED.

6. SECTORAL PROBLEMS

AGRICULTURE- THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR IS IN DECLINE. TOTAL VOLUME AND VALUE OF TRADITIONAL AGRICULTURAL EXPORTS (BANANAS, COCONUTS, CITRUS) IS DECREASING AND IMPORTS OF FOOD REQUIREMENTS ALMOST TRIPLED SINCE 1960. SOME 60-70 PERCENT OF ALL FOODS CONSUMED ON THE ISLAND ARE IMPORTED. SEVERAL FACTORS CONTRIBUTE TO THIS SITUATION.

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PAGE 02 BRIDGE 01982 02 OF 04 211720Z

- THE "PLANTATION-ECONOMY" SYSTEM IS MORBUND. YOUNG DOMINICANS RESIST WORKING AS AGRICULTURAL LABORERS. PLANTATION OWNERS ARE INCREASINGLY CONCERNED ABOUT NATIONALIZATION OR EXPROPRIATION OF THEIR HOLDINGS. VERY LITTLE INVESTMENT IS MADE IN PLANTATIONS AND NECESSARY STEPS TO IMPROVE PRODUCTION ARE NOT TAKEN.

-THREE PERCENT OF THE POPULATION OWNS 60 PERCENT OF ARABLE LAND AND 10 PERCENT OWN 70 PERCENT. THERE ARE SERIOUS MARKETING PROBLEMS IN MOST AGRICULTURAL SECTORS. THE PATTERN OF GLUTS AND SCARCITIES DOMINATES.

-MOST SMALL FARMERS (AND FISHERMEN) ARE IGNORANT REGARDING ALTERNATE AND POSSIBLY SUPERIOR PRODUCTION PROCESSES AND HAVE NO CREDIT AVAILABLE TO THEM.

EDUCATION-WHILE VIRTUALLY ALL PRIMARY SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN ATTEND SCHOOL, THE TYPE OF EDUCATION PROVIDED IS POOR IN QUALITY AND LIMITED IN IMPACT. MANY PRIMARY SCHOOL-LEAVERS ARE BARELY LITERATE OR NUMERATE. THOUGH THIS IS CHANGING NOW, THE SECONDARY SCHOOLS STILL SEEM TO BE PREPARING STUDENTS FOR LIFE IN THE METROPOLITAN COUNTRIES AND/OR FOR WHITE COLLAR CAREERS. TWO MAJOR FACTORS CONTRIBUTE TO THIS SITUATION:

-ONLY 20 PERCENT OF THE ISLAND'S 660 PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS ARE QUALIFIED EVEN BY THE ISLAND'S MINIMAL STANDARDS. THE TEACHER TRAINING COLLEGE HAS AN OUTPUT POTENTIAL OF ONLY 30 PER YEAR.

-PHYSICAL FACILITIES ARE INADEQUATE AND DETERIORATING.

PHYSICAL SPACE PER PUPIL IN MOST OF THE 60 PRIMARY
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PAGE 03 BRIDGE 01982 02 OF 04 211720Z

SCHOOLS AVERAGES ABOUT 7 SQ. FT. (VERSUS A DESIRABLE
LEVEL OF 10 SQ. FT.). THERE ARE NEVER ENOUGH TEXTBOOKS.

HEALTH-DOMINICA'S HEALTH PROBLEMS ARE NOT AS SEVERE
AS THOSE WHICH FACE MOST OF THE DEVELOPING WORLD. THE
MAJOR DEBILITATING DISEASES FOUND IN MANY DEVELOPING
COUNTRIES (I.E. MALARIA, CHOLERA, TYPHOID,
ETC.) ARE WELL UNDER CONTROL. HEALTH SERVICES INFRA-
STRUCTURE IS RELATIVELY GOOD. THE MAJOR HOSPITAL AND
THE THREE SECONDARY HOSPITALS PROVIDE REASONABLE SER-
VICES. THE 48 HEALTH CENTERS ON THE ISLAND, THOUGH
HAMPERED BY SHORTAGES OF BASIC MEDICAL EQUIPMENT AND
SUPPLIES, AT LEAST HAVE CAPABILITIES FOR PRIMARY CARE
AND CAN REFER MORE SERIOUS CASES TO THE HOSPITALS.
THE MAJOR HEALTH PROBLEM THAT DOMINICA FACES IS ITS
INABILITY TO FULLY UTILIZE EXISTING FACILITIES. SEVERAL
FACTORS ARE CONTRIBUTORY:

-THE HEALTH SERVICES SYSTEM WAS INSTALLED BY THE
BRITISH, IS VERY EXPENSIVE TO MAINTAIN, AND DOMINICA
CANNOT AFFORD IT. THE PERSONNEL REQUIRED TO STAFF THE
SYSTEM ARE PRIME CANDIDATES FOR THE "BRAIN-DRAIN."

-THERE REMAINS AN EXCESSIVE RELIANCE ON THE MORE EXPEN-
SIVE HEALTH PRACTITIONERS WHEN PERSONNEL TRAINED AT LOWER
SKILL LEVELS COULD WELL PROVIDE MANY OF THE SERVICES.
MOST PEOPLE ARE ACCUSTOMED TO AND DEMAND PHYSICIAN CARE
RATHER THAN PARAMEDICAL CARE.

-NO SYSTEMATIC, RELIABLE INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE TO
HEALTH SYSTEM MANAGERS ON COST/IMPACT OF HEALTH SERVICES
PROVIDED.

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 01 BRIDGE 01982 03 OF 04 211721Z
ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 AID-05 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08
FRB-03 INR-10 NSAE-00 ICA-11 TRSE-00 XMB-02

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INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN
AMCONSUL MARTINIQUE POUCH

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 3 OF 4 BRIDGETOWN 1982

TOURISM-TOURISM IS NOT YET CONTRIBUTING ANYWHERE NEAR ITS POTENTIAL. DOMINICA'S SPECTACULAR NATURAL BEAUTY SHOULD MAKE IT A STRONG ATTRACTION. TOURIST ARRIVALS AVERAGE SOME 14,000 - 17,000 PER YEAR IN DOMINICA AS COMPARED WITH APPROXIMATELY 70,000 PER YEAR IN ST. LUCIA AND 50,000 PER YEAR IN GRENADA. THE TOURISM INDUSTRY PROVIDES DIRECT EMPLOYMENT FOR ONLY 160 PEOPLE IN DOMINICA COMPARED TO 1,600 IN ST. LUCIA. MAJOR FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THIS SITUATION ARE:

-DOMINICA IS AN INCONVENIENT PLACE TO GET TO. THE SERVICES OF LIAT, WHICH MONOPOLIZES SCHEDULED FLIGHTS TO DOMINICA, ARE POOR.

-THE TRIP FROM DOMINICA'S AIRPORT TO ITS HOTELS, IS LONG, ROUGH, TIME-CONSUMING, AND EXPENSIVE.

-BECAUSE OF UNFAVORABLE TOURIST GUIDEBOOK ENTRIES THE ISLAND SUFFERS FROM A BAD AND LARGELY UNJUSTIFIED REPUTATION AS A DANGEROUS PLACE.
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 BRIDGE 01982 03 OF 04 211721Z

-THE ISLAND HAS FEW ATTRACTIVE BEACHES.

BUSINESS/INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT - THE BUSINESS/INDUSTRIAL SECTOR IN DOMINICA IS PREDOMINANTLY AGRO-BASED AND IS VERY SMALL (EMPLOYING ONLY ABOUT 8 PERCENT OF THE TOTAL WORK FORCE). NOT COUNTING THE NUMEROUS "RUM-SHOPS" THERE ARE ONLY SOME 50 ENTERPRISES. ALMOST ALL ARE LOCALLY OWNED. FOREIGN CAPITAL INVESTMENT IN DOMINICA IS MINIMAL. THE BUSINESS/INDUSTRIAL SECTOR IN DOMINICA HAS BEEN IN A STAGNATING SITUATION FOR THE LAST 5-10 YEARS. CONTRIBUTORY FACTORS TO THIS SITUATION ARE:

-THE POOR RELATIONS BETWEEN THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY

AND THE GOVERNMENT, THE GOVERNMENT IS VIEWED AS BEING ANTI-BUSINESS AND ANTI-CAPITALIST. THERE IS MUCH CONCERN ABOUT POSSIBLE NATIONALIZATION OF PRIVATE BUSINESSES.

-UNRELIABLE TRANSPORTATION INTO AND OUT OF THE ISLAND AND DIFFICULT INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS.

-ABSENCE OF (NON-AGRICULTURAL) RAW MATERIALS.

-LIMITED INTERNAL MARKET.

7. POTENTIAL

WHILE DOMINICA WILL NEVER BE A SELF-RELIANT INDUSTRIAL POWEHOUSE, CAREFUL AND JDICIOUS PLANNING AND MANAGE-
MENT OF THE RESOURCES IT HAS SHOULD RESULT IN ITS BEING
ABLE TO GENERATE THE GOODS AND SERVICES REQUIRED TO
PROVIDE FOR A REASONABLE STANDARD OF LIVING.
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 BRIDGE 01982 03 OF 04 211721Z

THE ISLAND'S RESOURCES THOUGH LIMITED, ARE SIGNIFICANT.
AMONG OTHER ASSETS, THE ISLAND HAS:

- A DESIRABLE CLIMATE
- SPECTACULAR SCENERY
- AMPLE FRESH WATER SUPPLIES
- A REASONABLE AMOUNT OF ACCEPTABLE AGRICULTURAL
LAND AND GOOD GROWING CONDITIONS.
- ABOUT 40,000 ACRES OF POTENTIALLY EXPLOITABLE
FORESTS.
- RIVERS AND GEO-THERMAL ENERGY SOURCES THAT
CAN BE HARNESSSED FOR POWER SUPPLY
- SIZABLE HIGH QUALITY CLAY AND LIMESTONE
DEPOSITS
- PROXIMITY TO NORTH AMERICAN MARKETS
- BASICALLY SOUND SOCIAL SERVICES INFRANSTRUCTURE
- AN ENGLISH-SPEAKING POPULATION
- A POPULATION WHICH UNDERSTANDS AND APPRECIATES
THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF 'SELF-HELP'
ACTIVITIES.
- DEEP DRAFT HARBORS.

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PAGE 01 BRIDGE 01982 04 OF 04 211733Z
ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 AID-05 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08
FRB-03 INR-10 NSAE-00 ICA-11 TRSE-00 XMB-02
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AMCONSUL MARTINIQUE POUCH

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 4 OF 4 BRIDGETOWN 1982

FROM THE CAREFUL MANAGEMENT AND EXPLOITATION OF THESE
(AND OTHER) RESOURCES, IT SEEMS PROBABLE THAT THE ISLAND
COULD:

- ATTAIN GREATER EMPLOYMENT
- PRODUCE A GREATER PERCENTAGE OF ITS OWN FOOD REQUIREMENTS
- DOUBLE EXPORT OF SOME OF THE TRADITIONAL CROPS
- INCREASE TOURISM BY 300 PERCENT
- INDUCE 8-10 FOREIGN FIRMS TO ESTABLISH
- "SCREWDRIVER" INDUSTRIES EMPLOYING SOME 1,000
- 2,000 PEOPLE.
- BECOME SELF-SUFFICIENT IN LUMBER AND WOOD PRODUCTS
- WITH SOME POSSIBILITY FOR EXPORTS.

8. PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS:

IN COORDINATION WITH INTERESTED DONOR COUNTRIES, THE
NEIGHBORING FRENCH ISLANDS AND MULTILATERAL ORGANIZA-
TIONS WE SHOULD ENCOURAGE AND ASSIST DOMINICA TO TAKE
ADVANTAGE OF THE RESOURCES IT HAS TO AMELIORATE
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BRIDGE 01982 04 OF 04 211733Z

ITS PROBLEMS. SOME PROBLEMS ARE ALREADY BEING ADDRESSED
BY DOMINICA FROM ITS OWN RESOURCES AND WITH EXTERNAL AS-
SISTANCE. FURTHER ASSISTANCE IS REQUIRED. US-DIRECTED
ASSISTANCE COULD HAVE PROFOUND IMPACT. THE HIGHEST PRIORITY
FOR DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE SHOULD BE INVESTMENT IN IN-
DUSTRY AND AGRICULTURE THAT WILL INCREASE PRODUCTION
BY USING THE ISLAND'S MOST AVAILABLE RESOURCE, LABOR.
SUCH A.I.D. ASSISTANCE IS CURRENTLY AVAILABLE TO DOMINICA

THROUGH THE CARIBBEAN DEVELOPMENT BANK. ADDITIONAL A.I.D. ASSISTANCE WILL BECOME AVAILABLE VIA THE CDB THIS FISCAL YEAR IN THE FORM OF AN EMPLOYMENT/INVESTMENT PROMOTION FUND THAT WILL COMBINE LOANS AND GRANTS OF APPROXIMATELY \$7.5 MILLION. THE EFFECTIVE USE OF SUCH RESOURCES IS OF COURSE PREDICATED UPON THE WILLINGNESS OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR TO INVEST. IN THIS AREA OUR OBJECTIVE WILL BE TO PERSUADE THE GOVERNMENT TO TAKE STEPS TO ENCOURAGE PRIVATE INVESTMENT.

9. THE OVERHEAD OF THE GOVERNMENT IS EXCESSIVE BECAUSE OF THE NEED FOR THE SMALL ECONOMY TO SUPPORT EXPENSIVE TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE AND BECAUSE OF OTHER DIS-ECONOMIES OF SCALE RELATED TO SMALL ISLAND ECONOMIES. TO SOFTEN THE IMPACT OF THIS PROBLEM, WE SHOULD CONTINUE TO SOFTEN OUR TERMS TO THE CDB FOR FUNDING PROJECTS IN DOMINICA AS WELL AS THE OTHER LDC'S. SUCH SOFTENING OF TERMS SHOULD INCLUDE LONGER LOAN TERMS AS WELL AS GRANT FUNDING FOR CAPITAL PRODUCTS.

10. THE EFFECTIVE USE OF RESOURCES FOR PUBLIC PROJECTS IS HAMPERED BY THE LACK OF A CAPABLE CIVIL SERVICE. WE SHALL ASSIST IN THIS AREA THROUGH REGIONAL PROGRAMS TO IMPROVE PROJECT PLANNING DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION. ONE SUCH PROJECT IS CURRENTLY UNDER DISCONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BRIDGE 01982 04 OF 04 211733Z

DISCUSSION WITH THE CDB AND ANOTHER SUCH PROJECT WAS INCLUDED IN THE A.I.D. 1980 ABS.

11. OTHER AREAS IN WHICH THE U.S. COULD ASSIST ARE:

-ASSISTANCE IN THE EXPANSION OF THE CAPABILITIES AND IMPACT OF THE DOMINICA AGRICULTURAL MARKETING BOARD (DAMB) SO AS TO MAKE IT BETTER ABLE TO FIND AND SECURE EXTERNAL MARKETS, STORE AND PRESERVE PRODUCE, RELIABLY PREDICT SUPPLY AND DEMAND FOR VARIOUS FOOD PRODUCTS, AND REGULARLY GET THIS TYPE OF INFORMATION ACROSS TO FARMERS.

-ASSISTANCE IN TRAINING TEACHERS TO TEACH THOSE SUBJECTS NEEDED BY DOMINICA'S CHILDREN AS THEY ENTER THE LABOR FORCE--I.E. AGRICULTURAL SCIENCE, HOME ECONOMICS, CO-OPERATIVISM, SIMPLE BUSINESS PRACTICE, INDUSTRIAL ARTS.

-ASSISTANCE IN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A "LEARNING RESOURCE CENTER" WHICH CAN PRODUCE TEACHING AIDS, WORKBOOKS, ETC. ON A CONTINUING BASIS; AND TO PROVIDE REFERENCE MATERIALS FOR TEACHERS, CURRICULUM PLANNERS, ETC.

-ATTEMPT TO ASSURE THAT CARIBBEAN TRAVEL GUIDEBOOKS DO NOT UNNECESSARILY AND/OR INACCURATELY MALIGN

DOMINICA AS A TOURIST DESTINATION.

12. IN THE MONTHS AHEAD THIS MISSION WILL SEEK FURTHER
TO REFINE AND DEVELOP THESE RECOMMENDATIONS WITH THE
ADVICE AND GUIDANCE OF THE DEPARTMENT AND OF OTHER
DONOR AGENCIES.
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